

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

Personality and Individual Differences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/paid

Fearless happiness in apparel store sales performance and the two faces of conscientiousness

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Conscientiousness
Fearless happiness
Emotional stability
Extraversion
Customer service orientation
HEXACO
Sales performance

ABSTRACT

Conscientiousness can be an important personality predictor of sales performance. However, it has been suggested that Conscientiousness may have two faces in the job performance context: the highly functioning worker and the nervous low performer driven by angst. Based on the moderated expression model of Conscientiousness in job performance and the apparel store sales context, we tested whether the Fearless Happiness trait, a compound trait of Emotional Stability and Extraversion, positively moderated the relation between salespersons' ($N = 251$) Conscientiousness and objective individual sales performance over one year in a large nationwide chain of apparel stores ($N = 174$ units). We found that individuals who possessed elevated trait levels of Conscientiousness and Fearless Happiness were the high-functioning salespersons, individually improving sales performance by more than €20,500 per year above beyond Customer Service Orientation. We discuss implications for the two faces of Conscientiousness in sales performance.

1. Introduction

In the apparel store industry, online retail has captured considerable market share over the past years, with a notable boost from the COVID-19 pandemic (Shaw et al., 2022). Nevertheless, many apparel stores remain an interesting alternative to online shopping due to factors such as immediate product availability, the ability to thoroughly inspect the merchandise, or general in-store services (Gensler et al., 2017; Ratchford et al., 2022). Also, effective sales staff is of particular importance for the economic success of large apparel stores (Herjanto & Franklin, 2019). Sales staff effectiveness depends on organizational and individual factors (Chawla et al., 2020). In this study, we focus on individual differences factors.

In addition to sales training and organizational tenure (Ng & Feldman, 2010; Singh et al., 2015), salesperson personality is an individual differences economic success factor (Hausknecht & Heavey, 2017). Conscientiousness is one of the basic personality traits and a recent meta-analysis confirmed that it can be an important predictor of objective sales performance (Marcus & Heibroek, 2022). Shoss and Witt (2013) argued that individuals high in Conscientiousness are strongly motivated to exert effort to succeed on tasks.

The aim of the present study is to assess the moderating role of

Fearless Happiness, a compound trait consisting of Emotional Stability and Extraversion, for the Conscientiousness-sales performance relation in apparel store sales personnel. Compound traits are linear combinations of uncorrelated personality facets which can compensate for each other and contribute to broader individual difference characteristics (Shoss & Witt, 2013).

We coined the term Fearless Happiness to denote the disposition to be happy as opposed to being driven by angst (Judge & Erez, 2007; Shoss & Witt, 2013). People who are fearless and cheerful are more appealing to customers, with the potential to be better performers in sales jobs (Judge & Erez, 2007). Emotionally stable and extraverted individuals can realize the benefits of being conscientious in jobs demanding social interaction. In these jobs, individuals low in Fearless Happiness “tend to experience angst easily” and “often divert their effort toward managing their angst away from their task performance” (Shoss & Witt, 2013, p. 402). We suggest that Fearless Happiness will positively moderate the relation between Conscientiousness and sales performance in apparel store sales personnel.

Our research makes the following contributions to several bodies of literature. First, we present the concept of Fearless Happiness to refer to the compound trait of Extraversion and Emotional Stability (Shoss & Witt, 2013). We suggest that Fearless Happiness will moderate the

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2024.112864>

Received 22 April 2024; Received in revised form 22 August 2024; Accepted 24 August 2024

Available online 31 August 2024

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relation between Conscientiousness and sales performance in store sales and that the interplay of Conscientiousness and Fearless Happiness will explain variance in sales performance above and beyond Customer Service Orientation (Ones & Viswesvaran, 2001). Second, our study is based on the integration of different data sources (HEXACO-60 personality self-reports with objective individual company sales figures for an entire year) so that we can quantify exactly how sales revenue increases when Conscientiousness and Fearless Happiness increase by one standard deviation. Additionally, we use a multilevel design (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017) with a sample of 251 salespeople from a nationwide apparel store chain in Germany. In this way, we have uniform contextual settings for all salespeople in our study. Finally, we control for relevant individual difference variables in order to rule out alternative explanations.

1.1. Hypothesis development

First, we shall derive the predictive personality traits from the relevant job demands. In apparel store sales contexts, salespeople usually wait on the sales floor for potential buyers. Potential customers have already chosen a certain sales outlet and are interested in specific items. In the showroom, potential customers usually can see, touch, and try items (Blickle et al., 2012). Selling in showroom contexts usually is done in direct cooperation with coworkers.

This cooperation works well when one is likeable and actively approaches and assists one's coworkers (Judge & Erez, 2007). To be successful in store sales jobs, salespersons must be able to make customers feel comfortable and at ease around them and develop good rapport with them. This is supported by the salesperson's potential to generate increased affect or liking in customers. A successful salesperson should also be able to work hard and persistently and display self-control (Vinchur et al., 1998).

Conscientiousness is a personality trait comprised of different facets that makes up part of the five-factor (Costa & McCrae, 1992) and the HEXACO (Ashton & Lee, 2009) model of personality. Meta-analytic research has found that for salespeople, high levels of Conscientiousness are often conducive to performance because such individuals are willing to exert effort and display perseverance and composure under pressure (Marcus & Heibrock, 2022).

Furthermore, recent meta-analytic research (Marcus & Heibrock, 2022) indicated systematic variability in the performance outcomes of Conscientiousness, which supports the moderated expression model of job performance proposed by Shoss and Witt (2013). Individuals who tend to experience angst easily direct their effort away from job performance toward managing their angst.

In *service (non-sales)* jobs, a related job category, previous research has identified three approaches to configure the relevant personality traits meeting the job demands (Shoss & Witt, 2013). In the circumplex model, it is the facet *happy* (hearty, vigorous, assured, and buoyant; I+, IV+) versus *nervous* (insecure, guarded, negativistic, and critical; I-, IV-). In the trait-by-trait interaction model, it is the statistical interaction of the personality traits of Emotional Stability and Extraversion. Individuals with high levels of both traits received the best performance ratings by their supervisors (Judge & Erez, 2007). Relatedly, Ones and Viswesvaran (2001) suggested the Customer Service Orientation (CSO) concept, which they formed as a compound trait of Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Agreeableness, with enhanced weighting of Agreeableness.

Grounded in these arguments, we take a compound trait approach and suggest a linear combination of Emotional Stability and Extraversion from the HEXACO model of personality (Ashton & Lee, 2009), which we term Fearless Happiness, supplementing the compound trait of CSO. In addition, a recent meta-analysis on personality and job performance found striking differences between sales and non-sales positions and between subjective and objective performance criteria (Marcus & Heibrock, 2022).

We therefore suggest that as opposed to non-sales service jobs (Judge & Erez, 2007), the interaction of Emotional Stability and Extraversion alone will not predict objective job performance in store sales positions, but Fearless Happiness will moderate the Conscientiousness–sales performance relationship.

1.2. Fearless Happiness and Sales Performance

Building on the moderated expression model of job performance by Shoss and Witt (2013), we hypothesize that the comprehensive willingness to exert effort to be successful (Conscientiousness), i.e., a strong work ethic combined with a structured approach to tasks, high self-control, and concern for details, will positively predict objective performance in apparel sales positions the more employees have a disposition toward Fearless Happiness. Higher levels of Fearless Happiness in salespeople will contribute to higher levels of activity, creativity, better decision-making when consulting with customers, and higher levels of liking (Judge & Erez, 2007), when combined with higher levels of Conscientiousness. And most of all, these salespeople will appear as more appealing interaction partners to both customers and colleagues (Judge & Erez, 2007). In sum, they meet the demands of apparel store sales positions very well.

In line with Bernerth and Aguinis (2016), we also expect the interaction effect to occur above and beyond organizational tenure and managerial function. For organizational tenure, research has shown that it improves job-related knowledge and skills (Guzzo et al., 2022) and thus demonstrates an important, positive effect for sales performance (e.g., Steffens et al., 2014; Titze et al., 2017; Wihler et al., 2017). Furthermore, employees who also take on managerial functions for other employees experience a shift in their daily work, resulting in less actual sales and more administrative work. Thus, managerial function should negatively affect sales performance. Not accounting for these two constructs may mask the hypothesized interaction effect and reduce the power to detect such an effect (Fritz et al., 2015). Technically, using organizational tenure and managerial function as additional predictors therefore raises the power to detect the interaction effect (Fritz et al., 2015).

Turning back to the interaction, the shape of the interaction will depend on the level and range of the moderator variable. With reference to Fearless Happiness, we expect a higher level and range restriction based on previous personnel selection, building on the five-factor model of personality (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Therefore, we expect elevated levels of Fearless Happiness in our sample of apparel store sales personnel. Consequently, we do not expect to find a negative relationship between Conscientiousness and sales performance at -1 SD of Fearless Happiness in the sample, but we expect a positive relationship between Conscientiousness and sales performance at $+1$ SD of Fearless Happiness in our sample of store sales personnel.

1.3. Research hypothesis

Fearless Happiness will moderate the relationship between Conscientiousness and sales performance above and beyond organizational tenure and managerial role. At high levels of Fearless Happiness (1 SD above the sample mean), there will be a positive relation between Conscientiousness and sales performance.

2. Method

We approached 425 salespeople from an apparel store chain in Germany. All participants provided informed consent before participating. To ensure the validity of the online survey responses, we employed various attention check techniques (Abbey & Meloy, 2017). In sum, we had 251 salespersons from 174 different sales units. Additional information on the Method and Results sections are presented in the Study Supplement. Data will be made available upon reasonable

request.

We used the validated German version (Moshagen et al., 2014) of the 60-item HEXACO personality inventory (Ashton & Lee, 2009) to assess personality. Fearless Happiness was calculated as the mean of Extraversion and Emotional Stability ($\alpha = 0.78$). It correlated ($r = 0.28, p < .05$) with affective job satisfaction (“I believe that I am more satisfied with my work than others; I think I have more fun at work than other people,” $\alpha = 0.73$; Weyer et al., 2014). The human resources department provided access to individual and unit-level archival performance data in euros from the previous complete year. In addition, we computed the reliability of the interaction using the formula provided by Edwards (2009), which resulted in an interaction reliability of 0.55.

Control variables. Based on our hypothesis, we controlled for organizational tenure in years, as it has been shown to affect sales performance (e.g., Blickle et al., 2012; Ng & Feldman, 2010; Steffens et al., 2014; Titze et al., 2017; Wihler et al., 2017), and managerial function (i.e., some salespeople also have a managerial role and function as head of a sales unit which takes up time that is not available for sales performance). However, the effects of these two constructs (organizational tenure, managerial function) may be stronger than the effect of the hypothesized interaction (Conscientiousness x Fearless Happiness) and thus may mask the effect of the interaction effect. Consequently, controlling for the effects of organizational tenure and managerial function is necessary to unmask the interaction effect and make it visible, thereby increasing the power to detect the interaction effect (Fritz et al., 2015). Next, we also want to exclude the possibility that any of these variables serves as a confound. We therefore also evaluated whether tenure or managerial function correlate with our interaction term. This was the case for managerial function. Following Simonsohn (2019), in a final step we included the interaction between Fearless Happiness and managerial function to account for the possibility that managerial function serves as a confound of the interactive term between Conscientiousness and Fearless Happiness.

In addition, and following Bernerth and Aguinis (2016), we also tested whether our results hold when we controlled for Customer Service Orientation (CSO; Ones & Viswesvaran, 2001), which is a compound trait of Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability, and Agreeableness.

Data analysis. Our dependent variable (i.e., individual sales performance) was nested within work units (multiple employees belonging to the same work unit). The value ($ICC(1) = 0.25$) indicated a moderate degree of non-independence across ratings. Thus, we used hierarchical moderated multilevel analyses (Hox, 2010) using Mplus and the MLR estimator (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017) to test our research hypothesis.

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities of study variables.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Gender	0.78	0.42											
2 Organizational tenure	9.02	9.79	0.06										
3 Managerial function	0.29	0.46	-0.01	0.12									
4 Agreeableness	3.28	0.51	-0.00	0.07	0.04	(0.67)							
5 Honesty-Humility	3.55	0.58	0.18**	0.20**	-0.02	0.29**	(0.73)						
6 Openness	3.40	0.60	-0.10	0.03	0.07	0.10	-0.08	(0.71)					
7 Customer Service Orientation	3.33	0.33	-0.18**	0.06	0.11	0.82**	0.28**	0.21**	(0.77)				
8 Conscientiousness (C)	3.94	0.48	0.05	0.04	0.14*	-0.07	0.18**	0.23**	0.27**	(0.71)			
9 Fearless Happiness (FH)	3.36	0.44	-0.35**	0.01	0.09	0.19**	0.00	0.17**	0.57**	-0.01	(0.78)		
10 Interaction FH*C	-0.01	1.37	0.13*	0.01	0.01	-0.16*	-0.08	0.12	-0.13*	0.15*	-0.11	(0.55)	
11 Individual sales performance	233.72	138.50	-0.13*	0.25**	-0.50**	0.08	0.06	0.16*	0.15*	0.00	0.16*	0.05	
12 Unit-level performance	271.50	84.71	-0.19**	0.26**	-0.04	0.13*	0.05	0.24**	0.24**	0.02	0.29**	0.01	0.45**

Note. $N = 251$ sales employees in $N = 174$ units; gender (0 = male, 1 = female); tenure in years, managerial function (0 = no, 1 = yes).

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

3. Results

To evaluate the independence and distinctiveness of our personality measures, we conducted a confirmatory factor analyses with the 24 facets as indicators of the six factors. The fit indices of this model were satisfactory (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003): $\chi^2 = 478.65, df = 237, RMSEA = 0.064,$ and $SRMR = 0.074$.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all study variables. Over the past years, the apparel store chain has used personnel selection systems based on Emotional Stability, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Integrity. We therefore expected higher levels of Fearless Happiness and Conscientiousness in our target sample of in-store salespeople as compared to workers from a broad range of other jobs and organizations. We were able to test this expectation by comparing the target sample ($N = 251$) with a comparison sample ($N = 460$) of workers from a broad range of jobs and organizations in Germany based on the HEXACO-60 items (Moshagen et al., 2014). Table 2 shows that the target sample and the comparison sample had non-overlapping 95 % confidence intervals with reference to Extraversion ($d = 0.72, 95\%CI[0.57, 0.88]$), Conscientiousness ($d = 0.60, 95\%CI[0.45, 0.77]$), and Fearless Happiness ($d = 0.49, 95\%CI[0.31, 0.62]$), but not Customer Service Orientation ($d = 0.10, 95\%CI[-0.06, 0.25]$). As expected, with respect to all three traits, the mean in the target sample was higher than the mean in the comparison sample. We therefore did not expect to find a negative relationship between Conscientiousness and sales performance at $-1 SD$ of Fearless Happiness in the target sample.

Fig. 1 presents the histogram of all the employees without managerial duties ($N = 177$) of organizational tenure in years, and the histogram of those with managerial duties ($N = 74$) of organizational tenure in years. As readers can see from Fig. 1, in both sub-samples tenure is not normally distributed. To address this statistically, the MLR estimator is helpful (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017).

We present the results of the hypothesis testing in Table 3. As Table 3 shows, organizational tenure ($\gamma = 0.24, p < .01$) and managerial function ($\gamma = -0.58, p < .01$) were significantly related to individual sales performance. Our hypothesis suggested a two-way interaction between Conscientiousness and Fearless Happiness, and this interaction became significant in Model 4 ($\gamma = 0.07, p < .05$), supporting our hypothesis. Additionally controlling for the other interaction between Fearless Happiness and managerial function did not change the results. The interaction between Conscientiousness and Fearless Happiness remained significant (Model 6: $\gamma = 0.08, p < .05$).

Fig. 2 shows the form of the Conscientiousness x Fearless Happiness

Table 2
Comparison of means and standard deviations of target sample with workers from a broad range of jobs.

Trait	Source	M	SD	Min	Max	95 % LL CI	95 % UL CI	Cohen's d (95 % CI)
Honesty-Humility	Target sample	3.55	0.58	1.58	4.75	3.48	3.62	-0.01
	Comparison sample	3.56	0.49	2.00	4.75	3.51	3.60	(-0.17; 0.14)
Emotional Stability	Target sample	2.82	0.64	1.42	4.71	2.74	2.90	0.05
	Comparison sample	2.79	0.54	1.44	4.88	2.74	2.85	(-0.11; 0.19)
Extraversion	Target sample	3.89	0.43	2.38	4.92	3.84	3.94	0.72
	Comparison sample	3.53	0.53	1.60	4.75	3.49	3.58	(0.57; 0.88)
Agreeableness	Target sample	3.28	0.51	1.71	4.71	3.22	3.34	0.21
	Comparison sample	3.17	0.51	1.69	4.50	3.12	3.22	(0.06; 0.37)
Conscientiousness	Target sample	3.94	0.48	1.58	4.92	3.88	4.00	0.61
	Comparison sample	3.65	0.48	2.06	5.00	3.60	3.69	(0.45; 0.77)
Openness	Target data	3.40	0.60	1.88	4.88	3.32	3.47	0.13
	Comparison sample	3.32	0.57	1.50	4.60	3.27	3.37	(-0.02; 0.29)
Customer Service Orientation	Target data	3.33	0.33	2.18	4.28	3.29	3.37	0.10
	Comparison sample	3.30	0.30	2.41	4.22	3.27	3.33	(-0.06; 0.25)
Fearless Happiness	Target sample	3.36	0.44	2.25	4.52	3.30	3.41	0.47
	Comparison sample	3.16	0.39	1.70	4.38	3.13	3.20	(0.31; 0.62)

Notes. *N* target sample = 251, *N* comparison sample = 460.

interaction at low (1 *SD* below the mean) and high levels (1 *SD* above the mean) of Fearless Happiness (Dawson, 2014). When Fearless Happiness is low, the relationship between Conscientiousness and individual sales performance is, as expected, not significant ($b = 0.87, p = .877$). However, the slope of Conscientiousness on individual sales performance is significant when Fearless Happiness is high ($b = 12.51, p = .042$). An increase by one standard deviation in both Fearless Happiness and Conscientiousness results in an increased sales performance of €21.68 per hour. With eight working hours a day and 200 days of work per year, this amounts to an increase of €34,692 (Model 4) in individual yearly sales performance.

4. Discussion

Especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, the personality of sales staff who can effectively provide in-store services is of particular importance for the survival of large apparel stores (Shaw et al., 2022). In our organizational field study, salespersons who were high on Conscientiousness and Fearless Happiness showed greater individual monetary sales performance. Thus, our findings supported the moderated expression model of job performance proposed by Shoss and Witt (2013), who suggested that individuals who possess elevated trait levels of Conscientiousness combined with high Fearless Happiness will be high-performing workers. This combination of high Fearless Happiness and Conscientiousness in salespeople yielded an increase in sales revenues of more than €34,500 per year. Our research holds several implications for theory, research, and practice.

We assessed Fearless Happiness and Conscientiousness with HEXACO scales, which supports the generalizability of the previous five-factor model-based findings (Marcus & Heibrock, 2022; Ones & Viswesvaran, 2001). Future research should also use a five-factor assessment tool (Costa & McCrae, 1992). This will offer the opportunity to systematically assess Fearless Happiness at the aspect and facet level, i. e., Enthusiasm and Non-Withdrawal (DeYoung et al., 2007; Wihler et al., 2023).

In line with previous research (Ones & Viswesvaran, 2001), Customer Service Orientation was positively associated with objective sales performance in the zero-order correlation (Table 1) and in the regression model (Table 3, Model 2). However, when we controlled for the interaction of Conscientiousness with Fearless Happiness, Customer Service Orientation did not explain additional variance in the sales performance criterion (Table 3, Model 5).

The difference between the concepts of Customer Service Orientation (Ones & Viswesvaran, 2001) and Fearless Happiness is twofold. First, the Fearless Happiness construct does not include Agreeableness. Second, Fearless Happiness plays a moderating role in sales contexts. Using

the moderated expression model of Conscientiousness for job performance (Shoss & Witt, 2013; Wihler et al., 2017), we found support that Conscientiousness is a double-edged sword in showroom sales contexts. As opposed to the concept of Customer Service Orientation, high levels of Conscientiousness cannot compensate for low levels of Emotional Stability and Extraversion in the prediction of job performance.

In the present study, we tested the moderated expression model, stipulating that the sales performance effect of Conscientiousness in *apparel store sales* depends on a third variable, namely the level of Fearless Happiness. The implication for practice is that organizations should not seek individuals with moderate levels of Extraversion, as suggested by the ambivert model of Extraversion in sales jobs (Grant, 2013), but should try to attract, select, develop, and promote individuals with simultaneously high levels of Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Emotional Stability (Shoss & Witt, 2013). For *service positions*, simultaneously high levels of Extraversion and Emotional Stability have a high potential for getting strong supervisor ratings (Judge & Erez, 2007).

Some scholars (Gensler et al., 2017) argue that department stores remain an interesting alternative to online shopping due to in-store services. Our research adds two insights to this: First, the higher the sales staff's Customer Service Orientation, the more the department store will benefit. Second, the higher the combined levels of Conscientiousness and Fearless Happiness, the more the department store will benefit.

As our study was cross-sectional and not longitudinal, we could not study the effects of training or tenure on changes in Fearless Happiness, Conscientiousness, and selling style. However, there was a positive association between years of tenure and Honesty-Humility. Another hint that there may be relevant socialization effects stems from the differences in past research in the effects between junior ($M_{age} = 29.4$ years, Titze et al., 2017) and more experienced field salespeople ($M_{age} = 39.5$ years, Blickle et al., 2010). In previous research, there was no interaction effect between Fearless Dominance and Conscientiousness in the sample of junior salespeople, but an inverted U-shaped relation between Fearless Dominance and sales performance, i.e., after a certain turning point, increases in Fearless Dominance resulted in decreases in performance (Titze et al., 2017). In addition, in previous research sales training had a positive effect on field sales performance (Titze et al., 2017). Consequently, socialization effects also might have an impact on the levels of Fearless Happiness and Conscientiousness in apparel store sales personnel.

Future research should investigate how sales or other vocational training, socialization, and organizational tenure influence Fearless Happiness. Developing a high level of fear control might function as an acquired self-management skill, productively tempering dysfunctional work behaviors (perfectionism, workaholism). Such self-management

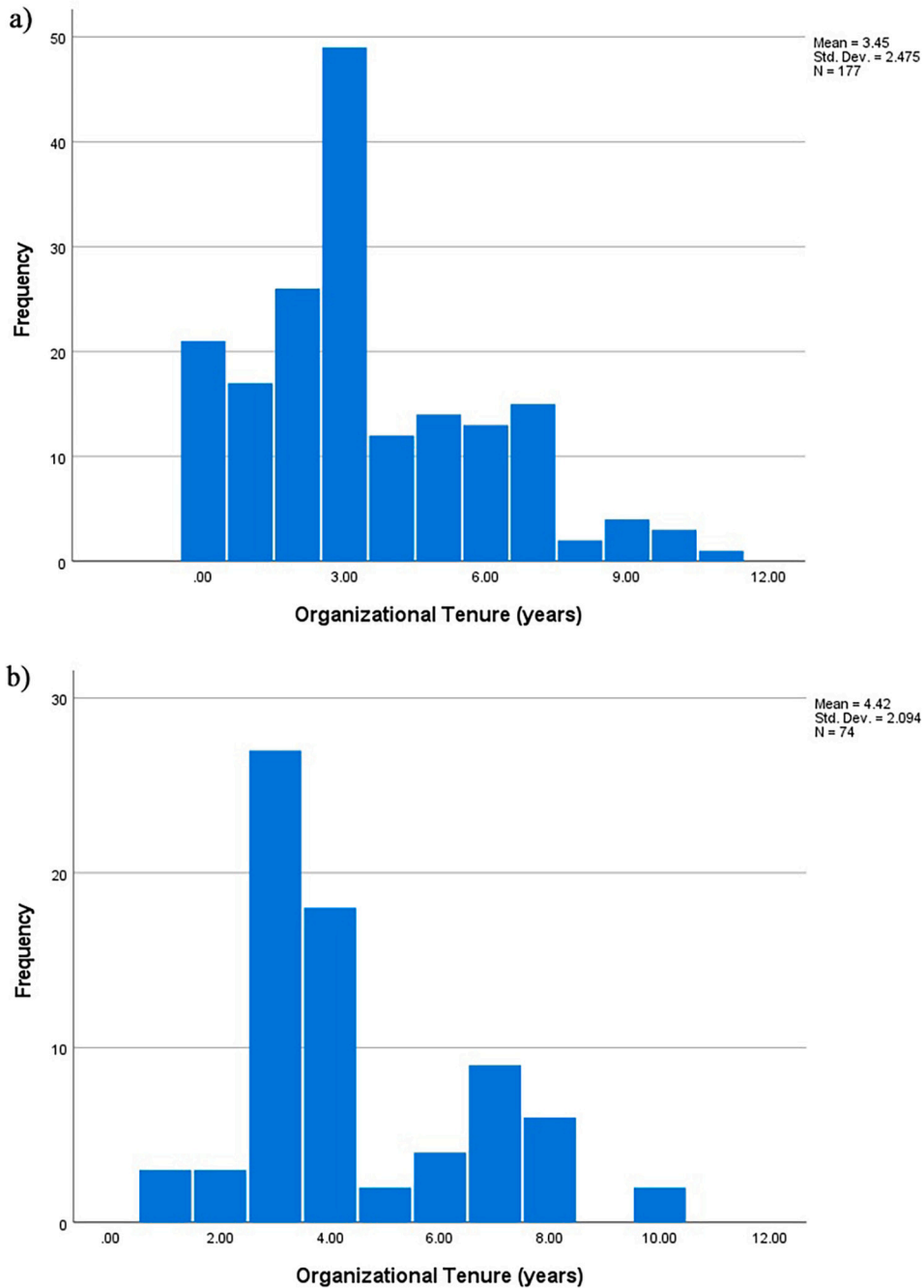


Fig. 1. a) Distribution of organizational tenure in non-management sales employees (N = 177) in years. b) Distribution of organizational tenure in employees with management duties (N = 74) in years.

skills might temper spontaneous impulses and help to productively regulate sales behaviors (Creswell, 2017). In sum, we call for future research to analyze how training, vocational socialization, and organizational tenure contribute to improving self-management competence in salespeople.

The present study is not without limitations. First, the study was cross-sectional and not longitudinal; therefore, no causal inferences are possible. Second, our sample stems from a single large apparel store chain in Germany in the apparel business. Therefore, the generalization of our results to other apparel store businesses or other sales business with different male/female proportions in the sales staff or other national cultures remains open to future research. Third, organizational tenure was non-normally distributed. Although we used analytical procedures that alleviate this issue, it also points to a more structural

issue in the sales context: Within the German vocational educational system, organizations provide vocational training for non-managerial and managerial functions for employees lasting between two and four years. After that, not all employees remain in the organization but oftentimes move to different organizations. This might have implications for the effect size of organizational tenure on sales performance and warrants further research. Finally, another point worth mentioning is the necessary replication of our findings. In light of the interaction reliability, the power simulations, and our obtained sample size, we only achieved a post-hoc power of 0.51 (Bliese & Wang, 2020) of the interaction between Conscientiousness and Fearless Happiness. Consequently, our finding should be replicated in high-powered samples stemming from a similar background. We would also like to note that our findings should only be viewed as the starting point for this kind of

Table 3
Hierarchical multilevel regression analyses.

	Individual sales performance					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ	γ
Within-level						
Organizational tenure	0.24**	0.24**	0.25**	0.25**	0.25**	0.25**
Managerial function	-0.58**	-0.59**	-0.60**	-0.60**	-0.60**	-0.60**
Customer Service Orientation		0.12*				
Conscientiousness (C)			0.06	0.06	0.03	0.03
Fearless Happiness (FH)			0.11*	0.12*	0.08	0.09
C x FH				0.07*	0.07*	0.08*
FH x managerial function						-0.02
Between-level						
Unit-level performance	0.89**	0.93**	0.90**	0.91**	0.91**	0.91**
R ² - within	0.36**	0.37**	0.38**	0.380**	0.38**	0.38**
ΔR^2 - within		0.01*		0.004*	0.00	0.00
R ² - between	0.80**	0.86**	0.81**	0.83**	0.82**	0.82**

Note. N = 251 sales employees in N = 174 units; gender (0 = male 1 = female); managerial function (0 = no, 1 = yes); standardized regression-coefficients are reported.

* p < .05.
** p < .01.

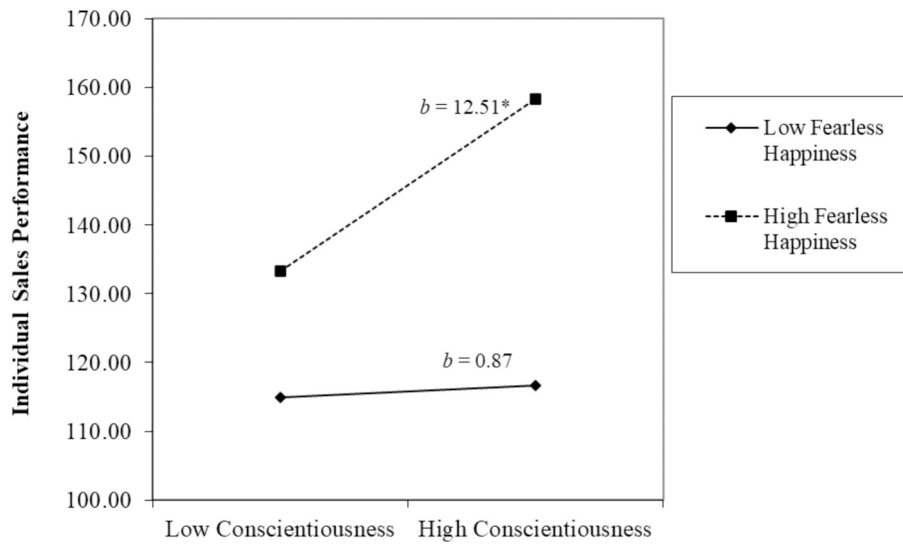


Fig. 2. Interactive effect of Conscientiousness (C) Moderated by Fearless Happiness (FH) on Individual sales performance per hour (Model 4). N = 251 sales employees in N = 174 units; *p < .05.

research and that much more empirical research is warranted to understand the interplay of personality dimensions for sales performance.

Our research also possesses notable strengths. First, we had access to objective unbiased performance scores reflecting sales performance over a complete business fiscal year. This is important because the apparel sales business has seasonal ups and downs over the course of a year. Second, the wider sales environment for all study participants was constant because all salespeople had the same formal performance incentives and restrictions. Third, by using a multilevel approach we incorporated the differences in unit performance in our statistical analyses. Fourth, by using control variables and the multilevel data analytical approach we were able to exclude extraneous sources of influence. That said, practitioners should review our findings in light of the effects of tenure and managerial function and not consider the interaction effect in isolation. Neglecting the context of tenure and work arrangements might result in overemphasizing the combination of personality, which would not be warranted by our findings. Finally, we can exactly quantify the increase in monetary sales performance associated with an increase in one standard deviation in Fearless Dominance and

Conscientiousness in salespersons.

5. Conclusion

Facing the challenge of online shopping after the COVID-19 pandemic, the apparel store business has the potential to improve its sales performance by employing salespersons with high levels of Fearless Happiness and Conscientiousness. In our study, it was associated with a notable boost of more than €20,500 in sales performance per salesperson in a year. However, our study is based on data from only one company in only one sales year.

Funding

No funding was received.

Ethics statement

This research project received the ethics approval of the ethics

committee of the Institute of Psychology of the University of Bonn: #20-01-13

We did not use *generative AI* to write this manuscript.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Jessica Kottirre: Writing – original draft, Project administration, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Gerhard Blickle:** Writing – original draft, Supervision, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Andreas Wihler:** Writing – original draft, Methodology, Formal analysis.

Declaration of competing interest

We have no known *conflict of interest* to disclose.

Data availability

Data will be made available on reasonable request.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2024.112864>.

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